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The Cost of Staring at Skyscrapers

There was once a Laz who decided to go to İstanbul for a vacation. Among the many things that surprised him there were the skyscrapers. He kept staring upward in amazement at such tall buildings. A man who had come from Kayseri¹ observed the great interest that the Laz took in these high buildings, and he realized at once that the Laz was a stranger to that city. Going to the Laz, the Kayseri man asked him, "How many stories upward did you look?"

"I looked up to the tenth floor," answered the Laz

"Then you owe me 100 liras. The price for viewing these buildings is ten liras per story." After receiving 100 liras, the Kayseri man went on his way.

A third man, who had been observing this incident, now approached the Laz and said, "Why did you give that fellow 100 liras? He cheated you!"

"No," said the Laz, "I cheated him, for I actually looked all the way up to the twentieth story!"

¹Just as Laz people have been defined in the folk imagination as stupid people, the residents of Kayseri Province, in central Turkey, have been defined as being exceptionally clever

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and shrewd. A folk proverb says, "He may not be able to read or write, but if he comes from Kayseri, be wary of him!" Obviously the Laz and the Kayserian of oral narrative are stereotypes.